



TEXT LIZ ELLIOT | PHOTOGRAPHS MICHAEL SINCLAIR

# Club together

Tasked with giving this London flat the feel of an industrial-chic gentlemen's club, architect Thomas Croft and designer Suzy Hoodless combined their talents, ideas and attention to detail to create these inspired interiors



DRAWING ROOM Taxidermy birds from Jamb provide an unusual centrepiece above a Thirties table by Bent Helweg-Møller. A late 16th-century game park tapestry from S Franses is the backdrop for Soane's 'Simplified Crillon' chair with a Josef Frank floor lamp

**SITTING AREA** A high-back banana sofa by Otto Schulz for Boet, 'Papa Bear' armchairs by Hans J Wegner re-covered in a Rogers & Goffigon cashmere fabric, and a trefoil ottoman from Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler in de Le Cuona's 'Vienna Velvet' pick up on the patterned Oushak carpet. The Sixties brass and glass chandelier by Italian studio BBPR was sourced from Dimore Gallery





**KITCHEN AND DINING AREAS** The bar stools and banquettes were made bespoke by Sedilia. **STUDY** An Antony Gormley artwork is showcased behind a Pierre Cardin desk. **ATTIC ROOM** Børge Mogensen's 'Hunting' chairs (left) work well in this stripped-back space

**HALL** An eclectic display of art lines the staircase. **BATHROOM** Catchpole & Rye's 'La Cage D'Amour' establishes a timeless feel

It can be clear when visiting a finished house project that the architect and designer have enjoyed an almost symbiotic relationship, since the result – as in these rooms – is an interior of real integrity. The visitor to this flat on the top floors of a Grade I-listed building in central London is struck by the extreme attention to detail, the overwhelming sense of comfort and luxury, and furniture that has been beautifully made by superb craftsmen.

This is the result of the harmonious partnership between architect Thomas Croft and designer Suzy Hoodless, who even share the same taste in glasses (Cutler and Gross) and model of car (Mini Countryman).

When the flat was still on the market, Tom had worked on designs for two other potential buyers, but they never came to fruition. When it was eventually sold, the new owner was introduced to Tom and commissioned the architect himself. 'It's as though I came with the flat,' explains Tom, who brought Suzy into the process of transformation at an early stage.

The flat had undergone years of bad renovation. There was a large main room that had been divided into three, and a boxed-in staircase led to a linoleum-floored kitchen in the attic. The owner presented Tom and Suzy with a moodboard of ideas that evoked the feel of a gentlemen's club, and from this they started to create the interior. 'The owner is a visionary with a very modern approach and proto-industrial references. This, together with the romance of the building's architecture, fed its way into the furniture and finishes,' says Suzy.

There was a nine-month period during which, to satisfy the local planning authority, there were four sessions of non-structural stripping-out. 'This was immensely useful thinking time,' says Suzy. 'Everything in this flat has been driven by the owner's love of craftsmanship and engineering. It took some time to find the right palette to express his ideas.' When he was shown a book on Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoet's 1932 Maison de Verre in Paris – a landmark of 20th-century architecture, built from industrial materials and glass with complex and exacting finishes – the path was set.

Light was a priority. In the entrance hall, Tom took away the staircase wall and stripped out the attic kitchen above. The planners were determined to keep the original stairs, so Tom worked with specialist designer and manufacturer Bisca to add a metal support and rails, opening up the space and introducing a more industrial feel.

Suzy worked with Adam Ellis Studio to select much of the artwork on display. In the entrance hall, the brief was to incorporate prints of previous owners of the building, along with skulls and other three-dimensional objects. A mirrored wall hides a luxurious marble-clad bathroom, where a mirror over the basin masterfully disguises a window that overlooks the common areas of the building.

**BEDROOM** Bespoke wallpaper printed in collaboration with Adam Ellis Studio creates an enveloping effect. The 'Tyne' copper bath from Drummonds is teamed with vintage Martini tables from Guinevere and a Fifties 'Egyptian' folding chair by Poul Hundevad from Modernity. A 'Dórica' floor light from Santa & Cole stands behind the staircase, made by Bisca to Tom Croft's design



Three chimneypieces from Jamb were installed, and, on a first visit to its Pimlico showroom, the owner fell in love with the taxidermy on display. Many of the pieces found there feature throughout the flat, particularly in the drawing room, where several multicoloured birds hang from a cage in the centre of the space. Thanks to the skilled work of lighting designer Sally Storey of John Cullen, the whole installation comes to life at night. A Howard Hodgkin artwork focuses the eye above the chimneypiece, while more black-and-white prints sit above a similarly monochromatic banquette.

The drawing room is the place to sit by the fire and read or play games, but essentially all the rooms are multi-functional. In the main open-plan room – where Tom introduced panelling and an exposed RSJ above the bay window emulates Maison de Verre – a slightly curved sofa faces a selection of chairs, while a dining table runs along one wall. Opposite the window is a striking kitchen presented as a bar, with its appliances neatly concealed behind sliding panels of finely veined green marble. Here, the varied expertise of Sally Storey and Rupert Bevan, maker of bespoke furniture and specialist finishes, came into play. 'Rupert worked on various glass finishes, before arriving at the wall of lenses that hides the cupboards, as well as the sheet metal with fretwork on top that covers the front of the bar, which, when lit, glows subtly, giving the space a warm yet industrial feel,' says Suzy.

The bedroom is in direct contrast to the rest of the flat, with inspiration coming from Maurice Sendak's illustrations for the children's book *Where the Wild Things Are*. Working with Adam Ellis, who printed the design, Suzy worked out the placement of the scenes around the room, so they match up exactly with the headboard fabric, also created by Adam. Tom's design for the spiral staircase, another Bisca realisation, has something of a tornado about it and leads up to a dressing room in the attic above.

Everything in this flat is bespoke, nearly every piece is unique and very little is left to chance. The bedside tables are wrapped in leather and have built-in phone chargers. A reclaimed cabinet in the main living space has been cleverly plumbed in to allow drinks to be made. In the study, a huge Antony Gormley piece stands over a desk designed by Pierre Cardin and looks as if it has always been there; the bookcases along the wall beside it are another Maison de Verre-inspired creation.

Upstairs, in what was the kitchen and is now an inviting attic sitting room, the original floorboards and bricks have been left exposed. Comfortable sofas and chairs are positioned for television viewing and the walls are hung with astronomy prints. A small and unpretentious, but totally correct, Jamb chimneypiece finishes the room.

Both Tom and Suzy are unanimous in their praise of their client. 'He was always very supportive and involved in the project, but allowed us to do our job,' says Suzy. 'It was a challenge, but we loved the process' □

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